

Random Encounters

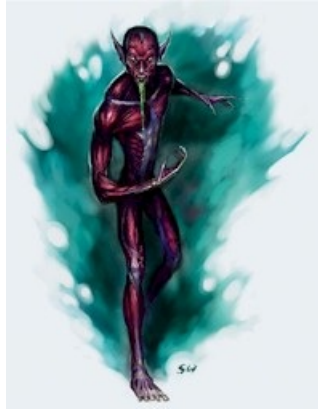
Dead Guys on Parade

By Dale Donovan



Quth the Maren, Nevermore

Once you've determined exactly why the PCs deserve to be plagued by a series of undead foes, you can start to introduce them to the cast of undead characters. (Even if you're using this as a stand-alone encounter, it's an easy enough encounter to drop in to bolster any undead-using villains you may have running around your world.) Set the quth-maren upon the PCs in the midst of a dungeon or Underdark environment. The attack by this undead may or may not seem out of place to the players and their characters. If various forms of undead have been common foes of the party recently, the characters may assume that this creature is just another particularly horrifying example.



How the quth-maren arrives in the heroes' vicinity is left to DM's discretion. If lesser undead are present in the area, the quth-maren could use its command undead ability to cause them to aid in its attack or as a means to gauge the heroes' skill and as a tool to soften up the characters before the quth-maren itself attacks.

When you deem the time is right, the quth-maren attacks. If it gains surprise or initiative over any PCs, it uses its spit blood ability on the nearest hero. In the next round, it speaks the following phrase loud enough for all the PCs to hear (if you're stringing these encounters together): "I am sent to destroy you, and so you shall die."

Any PC who turns to look at the creature when it speaks could become a victim of the quth-maren's horrifying gaze (use the normal gaze attack rules in Chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). After this, it doesn't speak again. In melee, it seeks out weak physical opponents such as wizards and sorcerers. When it can, it uses its spit blood ability on fighters or on clerics that attempt to turn or rebuke it. It fights to the death.

If one quth-maren is not a suitable challenge to your campaign's PCs, add a troop of lesser undead for the skinless undead to command or add extra quth-marens to make the encounter an exciting, fear-tinged affair.

Quth-Maren: CR 7; Medium undead; HD 10d12; hp 65; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (1d6+3 plus 1d6 acid, slam); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+3 plus 1d6 acid, 2 slams); SA caustic blood, command undead, horrifying gaze, spit blood; SQ darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 4, immunity to acid, resistance to electricity 15 and fire 15, turn resistance +2, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 13, Con -, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb +16, Hide +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +18, Search +8, Spot +14; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam).

Caustic Blood (Ex): Any target hit by the quth-maren's slam attack also takes 1d6 points of acid damage from the creature's caustic blood. Opponents that strike a quth-maren with natural weapons or unarmed attacks also take this acid damage.

Command Undead (Su): A quth-maren commands undead as a 5th-level evil cleric. It cannot rebuke undead, but it can dispel turning or bolster other undead.

Horrifying Gaze (Su): Any living creature within 30 feet of the quth-maren that meets its deathless gaze must succeed at a DC 17 Will save or cower in fear. Cowering creatures lose their Dexterity bonus to Armor Class and can take no actions. While cowering, a creature takes a -2 penalty to AC and loses its Dexterity bonus (if any) to AC.

Spit Blood (Ex): Once every 1d4 rounds, a quth-maren can, as a standard action, spit a glob of its caustic blood as a splash weapon. The quth-maren must succeed on a ranged touch attack to hit its target. This attack has range increment of 10 feet and has five range increments. The glob deals 2d6 points of acid damage on a direct hit and 2 points of acid damage to all creatures within 5 feet of where it lands.

Fast Healing (Ex): A quth-maren regains 4 hp per round as long as it has at least 1 hp.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A quth-maren is treated as a 12-HD undead for the purpose of turn, rebuke, command, or bolster attempts.

Undead Traits: A quth-maren is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be raised, and resurrection works only if it is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

Skills: Quth-marens have a +4 racial bonus on Move Silently and Spot checks.

Description: A quth-maren appears in the overall form it had in life, but without its skin -- just muscles and ligaments attached to its moist skeleton.

Bringing the Parts Together

While the first encounter may have been a fairly straightforward attack, the second one could serve to make the PCs more careful in all of their current dealings or make them begin to question if perhaps they have an enemy -- one that they hadn't expected to deal with at this point necessarily.

Coming in Part 2 of Dead Guys on Parade

Abyssal ghouls need give you no worries -- if you're trying to find a nasty challenge and perhaps an interesting way to die!

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